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SECRETARIAT

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ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTION

To: Members of the Staff

From: The Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services

Subject: CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM FOR PROFESSIONAL POSTS

CLASSIFICATION PRINCIPLES

1. The establishment of a classification system for Professional posts was authorized by the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth session as one of the reforms of personnel policy. The system developed for the classification of posts in the Professional category and at the Principal Officer (D-1) and Director (D-2) levels is designed to ensure consistency between the actual duties and responsibilities of a post and its grade; to guarantee equity in grading similar duties and responsibilities performed by various staff members throughout the Secretariat; and to assure clear definitions of post titles and levels for budgetary and personnel purposes. The purpose of this instruction is to set out the policy and procedures for the implementation and maintenance of this post classification system.

2. The basic principle of the post classification system is that it is job-oriented. The classification of each post depends on the nature of the duties and responsibilities assigned to it and not on the personal qualifications or experience of the incumbent of, or any candidate for, the post.

CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

Post description

3. The duties and responsibilities of the post are delineated in a post description form completed for each post or group of identical posts. The post description clearly describes the functional title, organizational setting, duties performed, instructions available, decisions and consequences of errors, official contacts and qualification requirements of the post. A post description form is prepared for each newly created post, when there is a change in the duties and responsibilities of a post, when it is required for a classification

audit of the post or related posts, or when the job description requires updating for the purposes of recruitment, performance evaluation, training, compensation research, organizational analysis, promotion review, and job analysis.

Classification methods

4. The United Nations classification system, which will continue to be in use through 31 December 1980, has been a combination of factor analysis and benchmark comparison methods. The grade level of a post has been established by direct comparison to benchmarks or by factor analysis, or by a combination of both methods. Benchmark posts have been actual posts which were established through a comprehensive selection and evaluation process. The factor analysis method has applied uniform criteria to posts throughout the Secretariat to measure and compare the content of each post and to determine its grade level.

5. Beginning 1 January 1981 the common job classification standards established by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) will be implemented. The ICSC system consists of a master standard (tier I) and standards for occupational groups (tier II). The master standard is a point factor classification method based on six factors: professional knowledge, difficulty of work, independence of work, work relationships, supervisory responsibilities and impact of work. Using the master standard, the posts are analyzed in terms of several elements and point values are assigned for these. The total point rating for a particular post falls within a point range which indicates the appropriate grade level of the post. The ICSC plans to develop the grade level standards for main common fields of work (occupational groups). These standards will be established in accordance with the master standard and serve as a classification tool, namely to compare the content of posts and to determine their grade level.

6. The classification analysis is conducted independently by two classification officers. The results of the department-by-department classification survey are reviewed by the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services and the heads of the departments and offices concerned. Cases in which the Office of Personnel Services and the department or office concerned are not in agreement will be reviewed by the Classification Appeals and Review Committee (see para. 8 below).

IMPLEMENTATION

Contractual status

7. Reclassification of a post will not affect the contractual status, salary and other entitlements of the incumbent of the post. Staff whose posts are graded at a level below their personal grade level will retain their grades, and may continue to serve in the post until a suitable reassignment opportunity arises. Staff whose posts are graded at a level above their personal grade level will also retain their existing grades and entitlements, and likewise may continue to serve in the post. They may be promoted to the higher grade only after the regular review process and in so far as the satisfactory performance of the functions and responsibilities of the post may demonstrate their ability to perform at the higher level.

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Classification appeal

8. A Classification Appeals and Review Committee will be established to review classification decisions in accordance with the terms of reference set out in the annex. Reviews of classification decisions can be either requested by the head of the department or office concerned, or by an individual staff member who is incumbering the post. The Committee shall review all classification appeals. Such appeals shall relate to the application of the classification standards and the correctness or completeness of the job descriptions.

9. The appeal procedures are as follows:

(a) Cases for appeal must be submitted in writing to the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services. Such a request must state the reasons for the appeal and, if necessary, be accompanied by a revised job description;

(b) The Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services will ask the Classification Section to review the case;

(c) If the Classification Section does not concur with the charge in the post classification requested, the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services will submit the case to the Classification Appeals and Review Committee for advice;

(d) The Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services will communicate his decision as well as the findings and recommendations of the Classification Appeals and Review Committee to the parties concerned.

Classification of vacant posts

10. All vacant posts in the various organizational units of the Secretariat will be classified using the ICSC standards. A component of the methodology for implementing the standards is that job descriptions will be prepared for all vacant posts and forwarded to the Classification Section for review and classification prior to the commencement of recruitment or appointment action. The Classification Section will conduct a classification analysis in accordance with the established procedures and determine the grade level that would be appropriate for the post. In case the new grade is higher than the previous grade, the initial recruitment grade will continue to be the previous grade until the new grade is approved through the budget submission to the General Assembly. If the new grade is lower, the recruitment and appointment will be at the lower grade.

Classification of new posts and reclassification of posts

11. In accordance with the established procedures, departments and offices must submit, with their budget request, job descriptions for new posts to be established and for the reclassification of existing posts. On the basis of these job descriptions, the Classification Section conducts an analysis and informs the Budget Division and the department or office concerned of the classification results.

Classification audits

12. For a number of reasons, the functions and responsibilities of posts are subject to change. In order to ensure that the posts are accurately described and evaluated, classification audits are necessary. The Classification Section will therefore conduct classification audits from time to time. A classification audit will, in particular, review the functions and responsibilities of the posts through interviews with the incumbents and supervisors. On the basis of this review and consideration of the job descriptions a classification analysis will be conducted in accordance with the established classification procedures, and the results will be submitted by the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services to the head of the department or office concerned.

Annex

CLASSIFICATION APPEALS AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Composition

1. A Secretariat-wide Classification Appeals and Review Committee is established with effect from 1 November 1980.

2. The Committee shall consist of:

(a) A chairperson appointed by the Secretary-General on the recommendation of the Staff-Management Co-ordination Committee;

(b) Two members designated by the Secretary-General;

(c) Two members designated by the staff representatives on the Staff-Management Co-ordination Committee.

3. The terms of office of the members of the Committee shall be two years.

4. A secretary shall be assigned to the Committee by the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services.

Functions

5. The Committee shall review all classification appeals. Such appeals shall relate to the application of the classification standards and the correctness or completeness of the job descriptions.

6. The Committee shall make recommendations to the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services on all cases referred to it for review and shall as necessary keep under review the list of benchmark posts.

7. The Committee shall establish its own procedures. It shall determine the information it requires to carry out its task in addition to the written submissions of the party registering the appeal. At the request of any of its members, the Committee may invite a member of the Classification Section, Office of Personnel Services, or any other staff member to provide any information it may require.

8. At major duty stations away from Headquarters, the Assistant Secretary-General for Personnel Services may establish sub-committees of the Classification Appeals and Review Committee with a composition similar to that of the Committee, to report to the Committee on appeals relating to posts at the duty stations concerned.